



June 7, 2022

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
Chair
Subcommittee on Public Lands,
Forests, and Mining
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Lee
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Public Lands,
Forests, and Mining
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, Chair Cortez Masto, and Ranking Member Lee:

The signatories to this letter write to express concern about the "Grand Canyon Protection Act" (S. 387), which specifically seeks to withdraw more than a million acres of mineral rich lands, including world-class uranium ore deposits that are located outside the boundaries of the Grand Canyon National Park.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the domestic nuclear energy industry provides approximately 20 percent of U.S. electricity, more than 55 percent of U.S. clean energy, and supports about half a million American jobs. However, the U.S. is now almost entirely dependent on foreign uranium imports necessary to feed America's commercial reactor demand, including a substantial portion of imports from countries like Russia who are not aligned with U.S. interests or values and who weaponize their energy exports for geopolitical advantage.

DOE Secretary Jennifer Granholm acknowledged this growing vulnerability in a recent letter¹ to this committee, saying "the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the corresponding

¹ DOE Sec. Granholm Letter to U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources and U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committees – May 27, 2022

impacts on global fuel supplies have cast into sharp relief the threat to global energy security from dependence on Russian-supplied fuels. Today, Russia supplies more than 50% of global enriched uranium. The U.S. enrichment capacity has waned in the previous decades as the industry has been undercut by state-subsidized competition; this has created a vulnerability for our domestic industry and national and economic security.” Additionally, according to the Energy Information Administration, Russia supplied 16% of uranium imports to the U.S. in 2020.

The letter goes further, saying that “expanding a domestic nuclear energy supply chain is going to be a key element of supporting a robust and resilient nuclear energy industry.” However, withdrawing vast known reserves of uranium and other minerals will blunt the Biden Administration’s clean energy goals, forcing domestic manufacturers of clean energy technologies to continue relying on increased imports of needed materials.

Federal lands – predominantly in the western U.S. – are the source of much of our nation’s mineral endowment. While mining is certainly not appropriate on all federal lands, maintaining responsible access to the resources that drive innovation, feed economic growth and improve our nation’s quality of life is essential. Given the vast amount of federal lands already closed to mining operations, caution should be exercised when determining whether additional lands should be placed off limits.

There is no question that the Grand Canyon National Park is one of our nation’s great natural treasures and must be protected. Fortunately, this was already considered when the park was created and a built-in buffer zone was included to protect park resources from activities taking place outside the park boundaries. In fact, the U.S. Geological Survey has concluded that the nine uranium mines that have operated in northern Arizona since the 1970s (since modern environmental laws took effect) have caused no adverse environmental or health impacts. An additional million-plus acre buffer zone, nearly as large as the park itself, would unnecessarily restrict domestic uranium production.

Access to our nation’s vast and diverse resources and fair regulatory policies that promote certainty in the mine permitting process are essential. As you consider ways to promote responsible resource development, we urge you to prioritize a strong, secure, and reliable supply chain of domestic minerals.

Sincerely,

American Exploitation & Mining Association
Arizona Mining Association
Arizona Rock Products Association
Colorado Mining Association
National Mining Association
Utah Mining Association
Women’s Mining Coalition
Wyoming Mining Association